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## Riot, Mutiny, Killing, and Cannibalism: George Brown's Maui Tour

IN THE 1986 EDITION OF *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, Colin Newbury wrote of "Commissioner George Brown in Tahiti, 1843."<sup>1</sup> The article reproduced two letters Brown composed, one at Papeete and one at sea following his visit there. These letters and the one presented here are in the collection of the Hawaiian Historical Society.

George Brown was appointed as the first United States Commissioner to the Sandwich Islands by President John Tyler on March 3, 1843. He arrived at Honolulu in October 1843. Some five months later, he embarked on a tour of Maui. Singular events punctuated this jaunt, but the matter-of-fact way he treated them gives a misleading suggestion of pervasive sangfroid. Considering the many controversies that beset Brown's official career in the Islands, one concludes that it was well for him to maintain a detached inner stance. Unfortunately, he was not able to do so. The Hawaiian government classified the fruit of Brown's labors as a yellow, ovaloid citrus product, cut off communication with him, and demanded his recall. A new president, James Polk, recalled him in 1846. His disappearance at sea during the home-ward trip in 1846 precluded self-vindication. But Newbury remarked, "Undoubtedly there is room for a re-assessment of

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Brown," though U.S. authorities disapproved his conduct.<sup>2</sup> The letter detailing Brown's Maui adventures appears to be the work of a balanced, amiable man—certainly not the reflection of a "Just because I'm paranoid doesn't mean that they're not out to get me" mentality. Not many of us are all of a piece, however, so perhaps the best conclusion is that circumstances alter cases.

Brown's effort is offered very much "as is." This not only avoids overwhelming sickness, but also gives readers willing and able to make corrections a chance to congratulate themselves on their attainments.

Honolulu, April 13th 1844

My dear wife  
Children & Friends

Yesterday I arrived here from Maui having been absent five weeks, and was glad to find the Congaree here with letters &c from home, and to learn that you were all well. The files of the Gazette and Register were very acceptable. I have already sent a number of Hawaiian papers to both those offices, and hope you will continue to send me a file as occasions present. If George H. will write a line to Hon. Thos W. Williams of New London Con. and also to Atkins Adams Esq of Fairhaven, Mass. requesting them to let him know, when any whaler is to sail from their neighborhood for these islands, I shall be able to get, very regularly, news from home. But still I wish a letter from some one of the family, mailed at least once a fortnight for New Orleans, or New York to go by the Vera Cruz Packet and directed to me care of John Parrott Esq U S Consul, Mazatlan, Mexico, & pay the U.S. Postage, and if there is any special news in the papers, send me a newspaper directed in the same way, and well enveloped.

I will now endeavor to give you an account of my trip to Maui, taken from my journal. On the 7th March I left here in the Palua, one of the schooners belonging to the King, and arrived at Lahaina the 9th after as pleasant a passage as could be expected. Mrs. Hooper's eldest son, a boy of seven years of age accompanied me. On my arrival I found that our Vice Consul had procured me very good rooms and I took possession of them eating

however at the table of Mr. Milo Calkin our V. C. The time between the 9th and 15th was employed in paying and receiving visits, and riding about. On the 15th I started at 1/2 past 4 AM in a whaleboat with Capt Riddell of the ship Japan of Nantucket for the island of Lanai nine miles distance from Lahaina, and after a pleasant pull of two hours arrived inside the reef, and landed with a fine appetite for breakfast, which was immediately got ready. We found a few native huts together with a school house, which also answered for a church on this part of Lanai, which is not a fertile island, and has no good harbors. The island has a very broken appearance and very little vegetation on it except in the vallies, which are in reality nothing but gorges, in some places not more than a hundred feet wide, and the sides of the mountains very steep and precipitous. It probably never will be of much moment to this people except for raising goats of which there are numbers on it.<sup>3</sup> After breakfast I started for the largest valley in hopes of getting some land shells, but after an absence of four hours and walking at least twelve miles, came back, pretty much as I went, except being tremendously tired. While absent the natives had been hunting for marine shells but I procured none worth having, except a nautilus or two. After dinner I laid down in my hammock, and spent the rest of the day pretty much in that way. The next morning it having blown heavy during the preceding night, and the breeze still continuing, Capt Riddle, Mr. Weeks his boat steerer, one of the crew, the headman of the village and myself started for another valley to see what we could discover. After walking about an hour over stones, and old lava, we could find nothing to induce us to continue our walk in that direction, & concluded to ascend the mountain and descend into the valley that I had explored the previous day. On arriving at the summit, we walked along its edge for the purpose of finding a place at which we could descend, the sides being very precipitous. I discovered what I thought was a good spot & Mr. Weeks led the way. After going about twenty or thirty feet, he said he guessed we could get along and we all started. But on getting down about a hundred feet, we began to find it very bad, and I would willingly have gone back, but that was impossible. On looking down below us for some two or three hundred feet it appeared to be nearly per-

pendicular, but go we must; we scattered ourselves, as well as we could, as the stones we loosened were tumbling over the heads of those who had first started, and rocks as big as our heads, would start with a bound and tumbling along would leap sometimes twenty feet at a jump. None of us had anything more than a cane, which, reaching as far as we could, we used to feel the stability of the stones below us and then digging our heels into the earth slide down some two or three feet at a time. Some of the places we had to pass were perpendicular for three or four feet and how we got down those I can hardly tell. If our feet had slipped, we must have gone down some hundred feet, with certainly broken bones, if not broken necks. We were nearly an hour & a half descending about six or seven hundred feet, and when by the blessing of God, we all got down safe and looked back on what we had passed I do not think money would have tempted us to try the same route again, certainly not unless we had had long poles pointed with iron to assist us. I assure you it was no joke, untill we had got down safe, and then we all laughed at each other. The seat of my pants needed a tailor.

On arriving at the bay we got our dinner, and prepared to leave for Lahaina. It still blew very heavy, and I thought it better to wait untill next morning, but the Captain saying we should get along well enough, we started, not however without some misgivings, as regarded the dryness of our passage at least. Inside the reef, the water was smooth, but when we had to pass the rollers, we found it rough enough; for at least five minutes we were in rather a dangerous predicament, the surf was very high, and it was as much as our six boatmen could do, to get out into deep water, which we at last succeeded in doing, and steered for Lahaina. The sea was very heavy and the wind strong, but we reached Lahaina in about three hours, completely wet through, having pulled nine miles in the roughest sea I was ever in, in a boat. But whale boats are safe boats, I always understood and I am sure I found them so that day. A common boat would hardly have lived. Capt Riddell told me going over that if he had have known it blew so hard, he should not have attempted the passage, and when we arrived all the other Captains said we were crazy to have attempted it. However I was not sorry, as it turned out, even

although wet to the skin. I like to see as much as I can and I had not had any excitement for some time.

On arriving at Lahaina, I found the whole place in an uproar, on account of some drunken sailors, who had been kicking up a row, some thirty of them had attacked the King's house, and were driven off by the natives, but being joined by some others, a battle ensued with stones, which flew in all directions, to the danger of every one. A number of persons on both sides were hurt, some seriously, though the greatest injuries accrued to persons who were not concerned in the row. Soldiers were ordered out, the streets were cleared, and with the exception of the ringleader, all the seamen were got on board. He fortunately was taken and put in prison. Mr. Calkin our Consul Agent I found quite unwell on my return, and he was obliged to take to his bed. On the 19th the sailor, was brought up to be tried for making a riot, and I went to see that he had a fair trial, and a jury was appointed, but he claiming to be an Englishman, though he came out of an American vessel, I told the Governor I should have nothing to do with it and he was remanded to prison to wait for the movement of the Eng Consul.<sup>4</sup> On the 20th there was a revolt on board the whale ship Friends of New London, and as Mr. Calkin continued sick, I took the affairs into my hands, and sent on board twenty soldiers, brought the ringleaders on shore, sent one to prison, and the rest went to their duty.

On the 22nd two men, who, with a third, had run away from the ship Ontario Capt Green, were caught on Lanai, and brought before me. On questioning them I found that they had taken a boat from the shore, a week previous, and started for Hawaii, but on account of the currents and wind were unable to reach there, and after pulling Friday night Saturday, and Sunday and their nights, became exhausted, having nothing to eat or drink when on Monday morning they were cast on shore on the southern side of Lanai. The place where they landed was surrounded by high land & precipitous and they were too weak to ascend it, and becoming desperate, drew lots as to which should die for the support of the others. The lot fell on their companion, a black man, whom they killed with a stone & then cut his throat and arm and drank his blood; they also cut a piece out of his arm and ate it.

They were confined in the Fort untill the 27th, when they were tried by a jury of white men on a charge of murder, and acquitted, I acting as their counsel. They were afterwards tried on a charge of stealing the boat & convicted, and sentenced to work out her value on the roads, not having money to pay her value.<sup>5</sup> On the 29th Mr. Calkin having recovered so as to attend to the business of his office, I left Lahaina in a double canoe for Wailuku, a missionary station on the opposite or North side of Maui, with Mr. [Cochran] Forbes, & his family, missionary at Karakakua [Kealakekua] bay Hawaii, on a visit. We started at 5 AM and at 1/2 past seven arrived at a bay where we took horses to the station about seven miles over a very good road. We arrived at 10 o'clock and were received by Mrs. [Ephraim W.] Clark & family with much kindness. The plain of Wailuku is quite extensive, and is a good grazing spot for cattle & goats lots of which we saw. As we neared Wailuku village, we passed small tracts covered with sugar cane, though there is no extensive plantation in the district. We dined at Mr. Clarks, and then called to see Mr. [Edward] Bailey & family, and the school of native girls under his charge and that of Miss [Marie] Ogden. I also saw Mrs. [William] Richards who is staying with Miss Ogden; she is a very pleasant and lady like woman. I passed a very pleasant night, sleeping soundly, and the next morning arose refreshed, and in remarkable good humor. My intention had been to have returned the day after my arrival, but the place was so delightful, the folks so pleasant and kind, that I concluded to spend four or five days, and go with Mr. Clark, Mr. Forbes, and Mr. [Henry] Cheever, who was staying there, to Makawao the residence of Mr. [Jonathan S.] Green a seceding missionary, and then with him to Haleakala (The House of the Sun) the highest peak on Maui, where there was one of the largest craters in the world, but not now in action. Dined with Mr. Bailey, after dinner took a walk of some four or five miles in a valley or gorge in the mountains, and picked up some small land shells. Returned and took tea at Miss Ogdens, with all the mission families, and all the school girls and their teachers. It was quite an interesting time. Between fifty & sixty girls sat down at two long tables in the dining hall. Our table was between the two, and held twenty one, twelve of whom were chil-

dren, & some quite pretty ones. The blessing was sang in the native tongue by the girls, and we then made a first rate supper, I from new bread of unbolted [unsifted] wheat, the growth of the island & beautiful butter, a great treat to me. The next day Sunday 31st attended the native church and heard a sermon in Hawaiian from Mr. Forbes. In the afternoon he came to Mr. Clarks house, and held a service for the children, a sort of Sunday school. The native congregation was well behaved and attentive. Monday April 1st at 2 PM after dinner started for Mr. Greens at Makawao 15 miles on horseback. There is a good road nearly all the way and we arrived at half past four. We were a party of five Mr. Clark & his son Mr. Forbes Cheever & myself and were very kindly received. The climate of Makawao is splendid. The days warm & the nights cool, we found it so cool that a fire in a stove was quite comfortable, and for the first time on the islands I slept with a comforter over me. We had a glorious supper of wheaten and indian bread, hot, with beautiful butter and the next morning at five o clock were on horseback for the mountain, a distance of 15 miles and a continual & gradual ascent. On our way we travelled for miles over strawberry vines, though the fruit was not yet ripe. We also passed millions of bushes of the ohelo, a fruit resembling our whortle berry in shape but much larger some of them & some yellow. The road untill we were within 4 miles of the crater, was not bad, but then it became bad enough. The ground being covered with stones, part of the old lava. We arrived at the summit at 1/2 past 10, having ridden to the very edge of the crater and such a scene broke upon me as I had never conceived of. In front at our feet was the crater, about 25 miles in circumference and about one thousand feet deep, with 16 cones or small craters, scattered over it. In the distance to the east was Hawaii, some miles distant, though from our height it did not appear more than 20. To the west was West Maui and Molokai, with the sea to be seen, over the clouds, which were a mile below us, and appeared like great bats of cotton wool and above the sky blue & serene. From the great height, nearly 10,000 feet, the atmosphere was very much different from that below and affected some of the company very unpleasantly. One of the children vomited. I was not affected. After spending a couple of hours in viewing the wonders of

nature, and eating our luncheon, we started on our return and arrived home at six o'clock pretty well fatigued, but with no accident to any except myself who received a kick from a horse on my leg while I was sitting on my own. The bruise was a severe one, but I got well of it in a week, though I was lame for a short time and was not able to wear my boot. On the third April after breakfast left Mr. Greens for Wailuku, and after stopping an hour at Mr. McLeans sugar plantation, arrived there at midday, in good health and fine spirits.<sup>6</sup> The district of Kula, over which we passed in our way from Mr. Greens to the crater, is a very fine one, and produces beautiful wheat and Irish potatoes, and is a fine grazing district.

We left Wailuku for Lahaina on the morning of the 4th having passed a very pleasant time, and being very hospitably entertained. I was much pleased with all. Mrs. Clark at whose house I stopped, is a niece of Dr. Kittredge of Beverly and has a fine family of children as has also Mrs. Bailey. Mr. Green of Makawao was formerly of the mission, but left it on account of his abolition notions, and is now supported by his people. It is a pity that all the missionaries are not, as they might be, supported by their people. We arrived at Lahaina to dinner, having been absent six days, instead of one & a half that I expected when I left. My face was well burnt by the sun in my excursion up the mountain, and my ears and nose lost pretty nearly all their skin, but the jaunt did me a great deal of good.

On my return to Lahaina I found a letter and file of newspapers from my friend Mr. Williams of New London. They were brought by his brother in law Major Perkins, who came out, in the whale ship *Hannibal* for his health. I found him a very pleasant and gentlemanly man, and from my description of Wailuku, he became desirous of visiting it. I told him that I would accompany him, and sending down by land for horses to meet us, we started off in a double canoe on Monday the 8th at 5 AM. Two of the crew of the canoe were divers, and coming to some shoal water I sent them down to get me some shells & coral. They brought up some very handsome of the latter but few of the former. We arrived at Wailuku at 12 o'clock, and all appeared very glad to see me again, and received & treated us with their usual hospitality. We again took tea with the scholars, and the next day



started back for Lahaina where we arrived at dinner. I succeeded in procuring a considerable number of land shells, and fresh water shells of different kinds, some handsome, but only two sea shells that I had not before.

On the 11th I left for this place in the whale ship Euphrates of Nantucket, Capt Upham a very clever man whom I knew in Tahiti, and arrived the next day. I was much pleased to find that the Congaree had arrived with my things and letters & papers from wife children & friends and that you were all well. On the 15th I also received via Panama some papers from the department and Mr. Thayers letter and on the 24th the Lausanne from NYork arrived bringing me more letters and papers. I have received letters from wife of the dates Septr 20th & Septr—no date with a few lines from Moses in it, Octr 1, 23 & 29 & Novr 8th. Georges of the 1st and 30th Octr Marys of the 29th Octr and one of no date Moses of the 1st Octr, Mrs. Everetts, Anns and the girls of Novr 9th and Mrs. Thayers of Aug 29th. I ought to have had letters from Baker, R. Rantoul, & Dr. Torrey, by some of these conveyances. I hope you will stir them up, when there are opportunities to send. I feel very much obliged to all who have been kind enough to write and they will all accept my best love, and this letter from the present as an answer to theirs. The expense of sending via Mexico must be my excuse for not writing to each seperately now.

April 30th. The Lafayette is in and I have just received my letters and a package of papers by Mr. Bates for which I am much obliged. Be good enough to give my best thanks & regards to John I Baker for the newspapers, also Bells News Room, shall send them papers by the first vessel.

May 6th. I must close this letter, as leave for Kauai tomorrow or next day. I do not know how this will reach you, but shall leave it behind to go by the first opportunity to the coast. I also send you a letter to go by the way of Callao & Panama by a vessel that leaves here in a few days. This will probably reach you first. Love to all friends, write me every fortnight either by way of New Orleans or the Vera Cruz Packet via New York. Write if you have not three words to say.

Yrs affy G. Brown

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Colin Newbury, "Commissioner George Brown at Tahiti, 1843," *HJH* 20 (1986): 83-104.
- <sup>2</sup> Newbury 83.
- <sup>3</sup> Here Brown qualifies for a "seeing through a glass darkly" award. In the early 1860s, the notorious Walter Murray Gibson became the chief Saint of a Mormon settlement at Pālāwai, Lana'i and developed it with his usual energy. But complaints led to an investigation in 1864. One result was Gibson's excommunication; another was the revelation that supposed church lands, bought with Saintry sweat, actually belonged to Gibson personally. These tidings brought no great joy, and most of Gibson's followers decamped to O'ahu. For years Gibson maintained Pālāwai as his headquarters and estate. In 1922, the Hawaiian Pineapple Company bought the entire island for somewhat more than a million dollars. Lana'i is just now undergoing tourist-related development: Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, vol. 2, *Twenty Critical Years, 1854-1874* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1953) 104; Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 221-1 and 312.
- <sup>4</sup> The riot created great excitement on O'ahu. A Lahaina observer reported that on March 14 between 200 and 300 drunken sailors fought in close combat with clubs and stones a Hawaiian contingent numbering from 500 to 800. The police were overpowered and prisoners rescued as the sailors "took the town fair-play." Another letter dated March 16 said that even as the writer plied his pen, stones flew "through the air and into the yard by hundreds." The rowdy mob peppered the King's palace with rocks and tore down the fence. The letter's author blamed the grog shops for these improprieties: Stephen Reynolds, *Journal*, 18 Mar. 1844 ts. HHS; *F*, 25 Mar. 1844: 35.
- <sup>5</sup> The two white sailors were Walter G. Pike of New Windsor, N.Y. and Robert McCarty of New York City. The black was Jacob Van Clief of Middletown Point, N.J. They hired a boat from three Hawaiians on March 14, then proceeded as outlined in Brown's letter. At the top of the cliff, Pike and McCarty met some Hawaiians who gave them food, took them across the island, and canoed them to Lahaina. Court costs and the fine for stealing the boat totaled \$30: *F*, 3 Apr. 1844: 40-1.
- <sup>6</sup> William A. McLane of Makawao was one of Maui's two leading sugar planters. The other was Linton L. Torbert of Honouliuli: Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, vol. 1, *Foundation and Transformation, 1778-1854* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1957) 316.